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## THE JAMES-LANGE THEORY IN LESSING

As supplementing Professor Titchener's "An Historical Note on the James-Lange Theory of Emotion,"<sup>1</sup> the following passage from Lessing's *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* (*Drittes Stück. Den 8 Mai 1767*) may be of interest. Lessing in the passage referred to distinguishes between actors who genuinely feel the emotions they are called upon to portray without seeming to possess them, and actors who appear to have them without really feeling them. Lessing prefers the latter. "Feeling," as he says, "is something inner of which we can judge solely by its outer signs." A good actor is one who, despite his inner indifference and frigidity, has a mastery over the expressions of passion. If he but learns to observe and to imitate successfully its outer marks he will soon rise to an appreciation of its inner meaning. I translate Lessing's words: "After imitating long enough the acts of others, he (the actor) soon acquires a number of small rules according to which he begins to act independently and by whose observance he gets an emotion (in virtue of the law that those modifications of the soul which bring about certain bodily changes are in their turn affected by these bodily changes) which to be sure cannot have the duration and the ardor of an emotion initiated in the soul but which at the moment of experience is strong enough to produce some of those involuntary bodily changes whose presence alone perhaps vouchsafes the inference of the inner feeling. Let such an actor, for instance, be called upon to portray an extreme fit of anger. I shall assume that he lacks sufficient understanding of his rôle. I shall assume that his own soul cannot be moved to anger because he is unable either fully to comprehend or vividly to imagine the reasons for this passion. And I say: if he has learned to copy the crudest expressions of anger from an actor capable of this emotion—the precipitate walk, the stamping foot, the hoarse voice with its shrieking or sullen sound, the play of eye-brows, the trembling lip, the gnashing of teeth,—if, I say, he but well imitates these things which anyone who desires can imitate, then an obscure emotion of anger will unfailingly come into his soul reacting in its turn upon the body and producing there those changes which are not dependent upon our will, i. e., his face will glow, his eyes will flash, his muscles will swell; in short, he will seem as one truly in anger without being angry or without in the least comprehending why he should be angry."

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<sup>1</sup> This Journal, Vol. XXV, 1914, pp. 427-447.